

# City Branding and Urban Tourism: A Case Study of Seoul and Taipei

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## **Abstract**

*City Branding has become a contemporary design practice of local government for promoting tourism in recent years. Its application, largely through urban tourism marketing, to the definition and communication of the characteristics of locations suggests an alternative line of inquiry beyond building criticism. In Seoul city, in order to develop new image and increase city competitiveness in the long term of tourism, city's public design has to be fostered. Meanwhile, for increasing competitiveness of Taipei's tourism have been involved policies with mega-event that may create more internationally attractive place, it is both physically and economically branding the city's image and attracting more foreign tourists. The purpose of this study is to discuss the improvement of urban tourism as means to design urban area and to strengthen competitiveness by city branding. For this, the paper investigates cases of Taiwan and Seoul of urban tourism in different contexts such as culture, mega-events and local government's design policy.*

Keywords: City Branding, Urban Tourism, Mega-events, Design policy, Globalization

## **Introduction**

City Branding has become a local government of contemporary design practice for promoting city competitiveness in recent years. Its application, largely through tourism marketing, to the definition and communication of the characteristics of locations suggests an alternative line of inquiry beyond building criticism. Also, so call place-marketing is the process of applying the branding process as applied to commercial products to geographical locations and is an activity within advertising and marketing. By conceptualizing in terms of public design, reach beyond the superficialities of city brand-marketing or built form in pursuit of an understanding of the role of culture in urban regeneration and identity formation. Communications for city brand marketing link the meanings of both private and public design consumption within the metropolis and may provide good ideas for the performance of everyday life.

Seoul and Taipei are both capital cities as latecomers of post industrial country on the region of East Asia. These cities have, from the 1980s, undergone a process of urban restructuring. This is due to a variety of factors including: migration workers from out of capital city for finding jobs; changing patterns of the manufacturing industry to the IT industries; the mass developments; a rise in personal transportation and so on. The impact of this is evidenced in unattractive city's image and crowded urban centres. Compounding and reinforcing this dereliction have been the rising attendant urban problems of inconvenient public design, decrepit facilities and regional inequality for those remaining. To counter this environmental and industrial decline on the centre of those cities, the local governments have propagated

urban design policy driven to increasing city competitiveness, through a discourse couched in urban tourism terms.

## **Cultural Tourism and Urban Design**

Cultural tourism are recently important in East Asian countries. It is commonly said that the cultural products of a country have a huge influence on its international reputation. This is culture as a 'soft factors', with 'hard factors' defined in city competitiveness. Regarding the world competitiveness index by International Institute for Management Development(IMD), the definition of competitiveness is: "How nations and businesses are managing the totality of their competencies to achieve greater prosperity". Competitiveness is not just about growth or economic performance but should take into consideration the "soft factors" of competitiveness, such as the environment, quality of life, technology, knowledge, etc. While cultural tourism can therefore be used to increase international competitiveness, it also plays a key role in spatial urban development.

The debates of cultural tourism strategies for urban policy constitute four factors: Firstly, economic impacts involving economic diversification and the revitalisation of the market(Pratt, 2007); Secondly, there the construction of 'signature building as a new landmark' or flagship developments that aim to become icons for a city branding (Evans, 2003). Alongside such famous buildings by international architectures, in Seoul would include Dongdaemun plaza designed by Zaha Hadid and Songyan BOT designed by Toyo Ito in Taipei; the aim of 'the creative city' (Landry, 2006) is viewed as the third factor for cultural tourism policy has increasingly been considered to be 'cultural capital' or '24 hours city'(Law, 1992). Fanally, 'cultural heritage mining' through which cities attempt to redevelope of cultural heritage, usually with an emphasis on building heritage such as colonial architectures(Richards, 2006).

As in Pratt's (2008) argument, the current trends in cultural policy have been changed by three forces: economy, culture and state. The city as a unique selling point therefore became one of the most important marketing tools in competitive global cultural policy. This approach has been adopted in urban policy in forms such as 'Unique' buildings such as Bilbao's Guggenheim Musium or mega events, expositions and festivals. Hence, cultural consumption concept is new strategy for promoting city as a brand product. There is complication that such mage-event may exclude local citizens when both planning for tourism and during the event, neglecting to consider these local residents. The cultural tourism in which cultural projects attract new consumers or oversea tourists to come and therefore is rarely directed primarily at improving the quality of life of existing residents.

## *Globalization and City branding*

Globalization is new trends toward urbanization in the world economy, in which world city formation has come to be regarded as a universal feature. It has been argued in many literatures on the world city that the development of cities can be known in terms of their transnational linkages and their positions in the international division (Friedmann 1986; Sassen 1989). Among the formation of a world city, it is argued that both local and national factors have played important roles in mediating this transformation. In this process, it is flowing from the local to the global as much as from the global to the local. The formation of a world city may therefore be regarded as a response of the city to global capitalism with a view to enhancing competitiveness. For enhancing competitiveness socio-cultural infrastructure of the city is emphasized, which supports global business operations and plays a significant part in global city formation. Globalisation through city branding is clearly vitally important in South Korea. Korean policy makers at the national and regional level are continually devising city branding strategies. Disgracefully,

however, according to the Seoul Welfare Foundation, Seoul citizens had ranked as the most unsatisfied with the happiness (quality) of life in their city among 10 major metropolises of the world. Therefore, the Seoul Metropolitan government has decided to focus on 'design' as a way to improve its brand / tourist image, and to cement its reputation as a Creative City (Landry and Bianchini 1995).

Globalization has been a major influence around the world since the 1980s, and many cities have therefore actively invested in the 'production of image' and used culture in attempts to gain capital and inward investment (Harvey, 2003). Many major creative activities have become 'brands' in their own right. City government use creativity in spectacles and entertainment to attract visitors and customers to a place. Local retailers and city managers also endeavour to benefit from the attractiveness of the city's cultural image.

In this point of the globalization, it is crucial to determine urban selling point in city competitiveness, which explains how to make a city image by public design, in order to acquire city identity based on the cultural understanding for the competitive urban tourism. In global capitalism, capital city is major economic drivers in each nation. This is particularly true today when about half the world's population resides in larger urban area. Approaching City branding concept, the Seoul and Taipei's Urban Tourism using on cultural concept is built with a global city, a sustainable city, a creative city as a new East Asian city's model.

### *Urban Design and Public place for tourism*

Generally urban design for public place is the art of making places for local people and visitors. It includes the way places work and matters such as safety, as well as how they look. It concerns the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric, and the processes for ensuring successful towns and cities. And urban design is a key to creating sustainable developments and the conditions for a flourishing economic life, for the prudent use of natural resources and for social progress. Good design can help create lively places with distinctive character; streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible, pleasant to use and human in scale; and especially tourism places that inspire because of the imagination and sensitivity of their designers.

Zukin(1995) mentioned, creating public culture involves both shaping public space for constructing a visual representation of the city and social interaction. So, successful urban design requires a full understanding of the conditions that include of physical and virtual consideration under which decisions are made and development is delivered. About the culture of design, Zukin wrote that cities and regions compete with each other as nodes of information, capital and labor on the basis of the skills and infrastructure they have to offer, but also on their aesthetic profile. Design and the image that conveys at times involve with other manifestations of the metropolitan habitus. This may mean that it is aligned with other qualities of the modern and liberal post-industrial or middle-class urbanity. However, enthusiasm to arrange all the material, spatial, textual and visual design elements, which go together to communicate a brand identity of a city location, requires such consistency as to make its claim to any unique qualities, by comparison with its competitors, an ever more difficult task. As the design message becomes more and more simplified design, so it becomes increasingly open to contestation.

The notion of dealing with urban revitalisation, economic restructuring after the Asian financial crisis and global repositioning by working on tangible deliverables such as mega-events and mega-projects is, at least on the surface, politically sound. The idea of making a major economic and cultural comeback, a dramatic turnaround or a quantum leap in the hierarchy of global cities by hosting sports events, building iconic architecture with high media visibility and rejuvenating tourism resources looks both viable and manageable.

Nowadays, mega-projects and iconic architectural initiatives, investments in urban and cultural tourism and various cultural projects, and expressions of interest in hosting world events are common. Economic pressure is the driving force of this kind of urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 2003). But, as succinctly put by Zukin, 'entrepreneurialism doesn't reduce the pressure. Both cities and nations aggressively pursue capital investment, which only intensifies competition.' He mentioned in landscapes of power, he emphasized about design should be considered in cultural sense. So may it can correct to 'cultural consistency'. Additionally, he mentioned, due to disappear of local industries it became more business cities-the basis of tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge.

## **Events, Festivals, and Tourism in Seoul and Taipei**

### *Urban Design and Hosting Mega-events and effect of Olympic Games*

Improving of city competitiveness and urban tourism, public design for urban development strategy through the mega-events experiences up to now appeals to many cities governments. Especially the Olympic Games, the world's most prestigious sporting event, have been held for over one hundred years with significant consequences for the host cities. Hosting the Olympic Games need to construct and reconstruct a large number of sports facilities and complete set of urban designs. Considerable athletes and tourists will also promote the development of service trade and service trade will increase during Olympic Games.

2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing's preparation of this mega-event, massive investment in Beijing's public design was carried out in order to transform the city to have a global look. This accompanied large-scale demolition and redevelopment of dilapidated inner-city neighborhoods and migrants' enclaves. The Olympic Games preparation facilitated the rebuilding of Beijing, contributing to significant loss of affordable housing stocks for urban poor families and migrants. It is therefore necessary to address the social impacts of the Beijing Olympic Games within a framework of wider urban policy contexts. As the host city of Olympic Games, Beijing will undoubtedly experience "Economic Valley Effect" after the ending of Olympic Games. For example after 1984 LA Olympic, GDP was growing rate had decreased to 3.2%, also Seoul had same case after 1988 Seoul Olympic. The reason why this happens is too much money is concentrated in these public design for mega events, which makes country's growing rate boosting up right away, but after mega events all the investments will be shut down and continue to decrease.

In reviewing Olympic Games within the wider context of other 'mega-events' such as G-20 and other Design fairs, festivals and commercial exhibitions, which have also provided a stimulus to urban investment and change. The knowledge is proved by the quantity of constructions such as stadium and investments for mega-event facilities. Then with mass construction and beautiful design for the city then its residents can received more benefit? If public design of mass constructions had support to urban development, we called that urban development, what is it mean?

The scale and nature of wider infrastructural provision has also reflected the needs and circumstances of the individual hosts. It is interesting, for example, that both Tokyo and Seoul used the Olympics as a stimulus to reduce pollution, improve sanitation standards and to modernize waste disposal systems. In both cases, it was felt that substantial public investment was needed to help raise environmental standards to a level which would be acceptable to international visitors and the world's media. Wider infrastructural provision such as sanitation standards can describe to show those hosting country has a global level competitiveness. But it may not for practically use in everyday life to residents at that time. For example, the 1988 Seoul Olympics was praised for its contribution for improving negative national image about Korea such as Korean War as a divided north and south and for reporting raised economy. Moreover,



some foreign reports that there were walls were built to hide the slums and poor quality houses from television coverage of the marathon run.

Figure 1. Seoul Olympic Stadium from the Han River in Seoul

Sculptures, decorative artwork and landscaping were introduced together with 389 new parks and 152 refurbished parks. Streets were improved by the laying of asphalt pavements, the widening of roads, the introduction of street lamps, the realignment of advertising displays and rooftop antennae, and the control of street stalls. If 'mega-events' such as fairs, festivals and commercial exhibitions, which have provided a stimulus to urban investment, why Korean government directed hiding slum area and poor quality houses? Built mass infrastructures and aesthetic designs are also increasingly alarmed at the tax bills which will accompany their town's brief moment in the international spotlight. And the most unexpected situation is in Seoul 'Zamsil' Olympic village, where the promises of more social housing, improved public designs and other improvements which were used to gain public support, but now the place were Olympic village 'Zamsil' became expensive exclusive housing in Seoul.

### *Hosting World design fair*

The present world design fairs emerged as a city marketing strategy. In Seoul and Taipei's experiences, in order to develop new city's images and increase urban tourism in the long term, design policy has to be fostered. This Design policy on their local government, is regarded as leverage to effective upgrade its appearance and even innovate city's administration.

Especially, Seoul mayor, who launched the Design Seoul Headquarters in 2007 for visible result. The Design Seoul Headquarters got the designation of World Design Capital Seoul 2010 from IDA, established Design Seoul guidelines, the city mascot Haechi and the Seoul colors, held the Seoul Design Olympiad (SDO) for Seoul citizens and the opening of the Dongdaemun Design Plaza(DDP) in Dec 2011. For those plannings there are over 100 staffs and an 86.8-billion-won budget, the Design Seoul Headquarters devised policy and set the framework. The Seoul Design Olympiad(SDO) was initiated by the Seoul local government in their effort to develop the image of Seoul, intending to transform the city from being just 'the capital of South Korea' to also being 'the city of Design'. The aim of this paper is to examine how the Seoul Metropolitan government has used 'Design' to encourage tourism and regeneration. The SDO was launched in 2008 as an annual event, celebrating the forthcoming designation of Seoul as the World Design Capital 2010. The SDO is not just a one-off fixed-term event, but rather a range of activities with a longer-term impact. The SDO is composed of a combination of conferences, exhibitions, design competitions, awards and educational events; this is a clear example of a 'cultural event' used to promote economic and cultural regeneration.

Seoul held the first Design Seoul fair, "Hi Seoul Festival" to rekindle the festive flame from 2003. In 2008, Seoul city revised Design fair into a four-season festival in a bid to consolidate the identity of the festival and boost the image of Seoul as a festival city. It selected a theme for each season spring-palace, summer-the Han River, fall-art, winter-light. It featured a variety of programs related to the seasonal themes during the Design fair.

The other hand, 2011 IDA Congress is supposed to be held at Taipei International Convention Center. As the Republic of China (ROC) prepares to celebrate its 100th birthday this October, about 3,000 elite designers from 60 countries are getting ready for a trip to Taipei to take part in the inaugural International Design Alliance (IDA) Congress, the leading cross-disciplinary forum for the global design community.

The meeting is the primary event for the IDA, a strategic partnership created by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design and the International Council of Graphic Design Associations in 2003, with the International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers joining in 2008. A month-long exhibition, the 2011 Taipei World Design Expo, and a five-day workshop for young designers will be held alongside the congress. It is also the climax for Taiwan's "Year of Design," as the ROC government has designated this year, with 33 design- and art-related activities leading up to the meeting.

As an IDA member, the Taiwan Design Center (TDC), a government initiative set up in 2003 to promote the design industry, chose Taipei to represent Taiwan and joined the 2006 bidding to organize the landmark conference. Coming through five rounds of voting, in 2007 Taipei emerged from a list of 18 other cities from 12 countries as the host, defeating metropolises including Paris, France, Melbourne, Australia and Montreal, Canada. It is impressive that national government's support played an important role in hosting the meeting. By June this year, more than US\$17.24 million had been earmarked to hold the congress and its parallel activities. The majority of the funding is provided by the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) and to a lesser degree the Taipei City Government (TCG), which have partnered with the TDC to host the event.

2010 Taipei International Flora Exposition is one of environmental design project of Taipei City Government for promote the growth of floriculture and drive economic as well as enhance the image of Taipei city in the international community.

For these Taipei brand marketing by hosting international events have been involved urban policies that may create more internationally attractive urban tourism place like as Taipei 101 district, it is both physically and culturally to upgrade the economy and attract more foreign tourists. Some of the issues that have been pinpointed include the design and construction of more public housing, better street planning and flood control measures, as well as the design of better transportation systems and traffic signs. Although these policies were targeted at improving the Taiwan economy as a whole, they also have largely upgraded landscape of Taipei city.

### **Why 'design' for urban tourism?: City branding of Seoul and Taipei**

To understand the significance of the Seoul Design Olympic, it is worth considering the history of Seoul and Taipei, and its global image. In the 1980s, South Korea and Taiwan were known for its export-led industrialisation, and had been named of the 'Four Tigers' (a group of South East Asian countries recognised for their economic growth, including Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan). After the Asian financial crisis hit South Korea in 1997, the local and central government and the private sectors aimed to bring about the country's economic recovery by switching focus from the manufacturing industries to cultural industries such as film, music and information technology. The vast majority of South Korea's culture industries are produced in its capital city, Seoul. Seoul has a centralised population (about 10 million) of about a quarter of the total population of the country (Statistics Korea, 2010). Seoul as a modern, international city continued, and when preparing to co-host the 2002 Football World Cup, the Seoul government announced the formation of its first 'city marketing' department.

However, in spite of these events occurring in the capital city (such as various urban functions and socio-economic activities), South Korea's international reputation arguably remains marginal, compared to the Communist power of China, the technological sophistication of Japan, and the military paranoia surrounding North Korea. This controversial image was the very reason why the new Seoul's image started to increase its efforts in city branding thorough culture to attract potential tourists. In fact, there is arguably an unbalanced concentration on events occurring in the capital city only; the central government

effectively neglects all of other cities. Seoul, therefore, has aggressively attempted to improve its tourism image.

As the previous study of Peter Hall, Charles Landry, Richard Florida, Masayuki Sasaki, the Creative city is considered the significant issue in the world academia not only in the subject of city economics and culture economics, but also of that regarding the city planning. This subject has been getting adopted as a practical policy and urban strategy in Europe and US to Japan and Asian countries and focused by the policy makers and citizens at the same time. Recently, in the nations under the serious economic recession such as China, Korea and Taipei, the Creative city and creative industry are gradually promoted as one of the policy goals in many cities. It is also established a goal of the life-enhancing city construction, which is pursued by the creative class of people.

The advantages of the creative city earned through the theoretical reviews and other case studies and identify the directions to contribute to Seoul and Taipei, are explained below.

First, the construction of the culture district through the creative special design to promote creative industry is significant. In case of foreign countries, the keynote is shown it is more than a new construction of the space or landscape of public space, but it settled as a art & culture space for the citizens and visitors preserving historical & cultural resource in the city and improving the value with the artistic application (Helsinki Metropolitan plan, Yokohama National Art Park). And it produces a space with cultural circumstance where the people have a desire to visit the place like Seoul Hongdae and Taipei Gongguan.

Second, the form of creative miliea(Creative environment) to gather creative people and cultivate these people is not a brand new facility but the existing space and leisure place. Creating 'art factory' renovated from the existing facilities and inflowing the creative industry can make a synergy and mutual cooperation.

Third, the notion of the creative city is better approached as a process than a planning. The Public Design Project is pushing ahead by the government as one of the subject of creative city in Seoul(Design Seoul planning) and Taipei(Taipei Beautiful planning). However, external landscape development plan or public space construction cannot satisfy both the revelation of the theory of creative city and development of the city competitiveness. The direction of the future creative city policy study will be focused on how the human creativity will be induced to the creative industry with the external infrastructure of Seoul and Taipei.

### *Distinguished design for city branding*

"A brand is not necessarily what something is, but what people believe it to be," explains Yoon, the incumbent director of Design Seoul Headquarters. Unfortunately, in the case of Seoul, there's a very tangible gap between Seoul's exceedingly pleasant reality and the world's less-than-positive perception. Some people think of it as a war-torn city image, as it was after the Korean War. Some people think of North Korea, that it's an insecure city. Others think of the Hangang Miracle or the '88 Olympics.

To help promote the city, Seoul has boosted its marketing budget to 40 billion won. This is already paying dividends, especially in Asia, where polls have revealed Seoul to be a favored tourist destination. To help improve Seoul's image in targeted markets, Seoul has launched a series of storytelling ads that utilize highly recognizable figures like musician George Winston.

Zaha Hadid, the British-Iraqi architect, talked about the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), which is to be built on an old baseball stadium site in the shopping district of Dongdaemun. She said that Asians have a unique way of understanding interaction between the environment and the building like as Seoul DDP Park she designed. In Taipei, the famous international architect, Rem Koolhaas has been awarded the first

prize in the design competition to build the Taipei Performing Arts Centre. The scheme includes a 1,500 seat theatre and two 800 seat theatres which plug into a central cube, clad in corrugated glass. The opening is scheduled to be completed in 2013 with a budget of 3.8 billion Taiwan dollars. The Taipei city council expects the centre to further facilitate the development of local performing groups and add to Taipei's image as an international cultural hub.

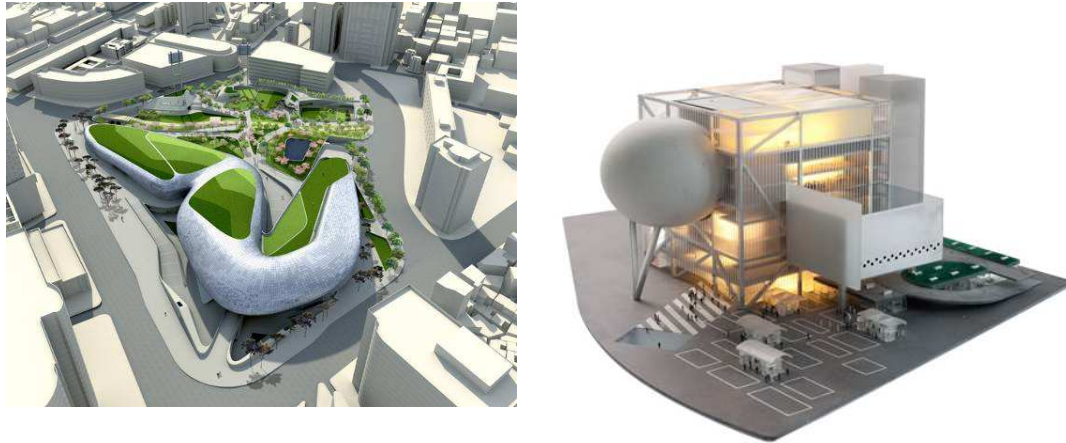


Figure 2. Dongdaemun Design Plaza in Seoul(Left) and Taipei Performing Arts Centre(Right)

However, these cases could discuss that the success of city-branding and tourism marketing by means of launching mega-events rests upon political process. How the government is able to convince the public that the building and investment in such a mega-event would be a meaningful exercise in the articulation and development of the city's image, while serving the citizens at the same time. This is about the meanings of the mega-event not just for visitors from overseas but also for citizen. Equally important is the extent to which a design policy can strengthen local institutional and cultural sense of an urban environment and atmosphere that would attract artists, performers, writers and other people in the creative industries to the locale for future cultural development.

## Conclusions

Improving city competitiveness, East Asian cities derive own urban design for urban tourism vigorously in many city branding ways. For effective urban design, a new motivation is one of the most important parts. In this point, the city branding strategy with hosting the international events is draws attention from local governments. In case of the mega-events such as Olympics and World Design Fair, they are given to cities as one of effective stimulation for urban design. Besides, it improves the pride as a local residents and global concentrates by design enhancing landscape image of the city. The architecture and scene of the city are the important factors to make feel the cities as attractiveness and have beauty. There is a trend to evaluate the higher value of city branding is the more attractive landscape.

Design policies of Seoul and Taipei's government have many meanings of engraving the design issue, offering the overall turning point to landscape planning policies of these cities and accumulating the experiences to established design guideline. However, looking into the details of the design policies reveals out some limitations which does not make satisfaction from overseas tourists and brings out vally effect from hosting mega-events itself to design achievements and urban development. The design projects has to be performed at the undeveloped area where the maintenance and design are required or at the place utilized by designers and citizens. And local government officials in the municipalities of the design Seoul project should perform in the urgency project time, shortage of budget, negotiating between



related organizations and the residents commonly. Also problems are appeared such as the deficits of coordination among the related departments of Design headquarters with citizen and the lack of specialty in the manpower and so on.

There are several lessons to learn from Design policies for Seoul and Taipei's city branding. First of all, this was a top-down mega-project with an emphasis on creating landmarks for the city's view. It ignored inputs from the public place as well as the regional cultural sector. The global standard and quality of the cultural facilities, the use of famous architects and the monumental status is underlined in order to keep pace with global standard of the significance of the project. Urban tourism of this case study is an attempt at city-branding and constructing design end products without real corresponding with their citizen and city's district part. City governments have to turn the direction of urban tourism project from branding strategy for only showing to the strategy of life oriented.

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